

CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WNHC 27.83-15

MS. DOROTHY GRAHAM WESCOTT



**NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE
Headquarters Civil Air Patrol
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama**

CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview
of
Ms. Dorothy Graham Wescott
by
Lieutenant Colonel Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 10 October 1983
Location: Manteo, North Carolina

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, Dorothy G. Wescott, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with LTC L. E. Hopper, covering my best recollections of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the Civil Air Patrol.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the Civil Air Patrol's Historial Holdings. In the best interest of the Civil Air Patrol, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all right, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Civil Air Patrol, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, right, title, and interest therein to the donee expressly on the condition of strict observance of the following restrictions:

NONE

Dorothy G. Wescott DONOR

Dated 10/11/83

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by

L. E. Hopper
LTC CAP
Dated 10/11/83

CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Civil Air Patrol Oral History interviews were initiated in early 1982 by Lt. Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP, of the Civil Air Patrol's National Historical Committee. The overall purpose of these interviews is to record for posterity the activities of selected members of the Civil Air Patrol.

The principle goal of these histories is to increase the base of knowledge relating to the early accomplishments of Civil Air Patrol members who in their own unique way contributed to the defense of our great country. Certainly not of a secondary nature is the preservation of the contributions of individuals as Civil Air Patrol continues its growth.

FOREWORD

The following is a transcription of an oral history interview recorded on magnetic tape. Since only minor emendations have been made, the reader should consistently bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of spoken rather than the written word. Additionally, no attempt to confirm the accuracy of the information contained herein has been made. As a result, the transcript reflects the interviewee's personal recollections of a situation as he remembered it at the time of the interview.

Editorial notes and additions made by Civil Air Patrol historians are enclosed in brackets. If feasible, first name, rank or titles are also provided. Any additions, deletions and changes subsequently made to the transcript by the interviewee are not indicated. Researchers may wish to listen to the actual interview tape prior to citing the transcript.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

In this oral history interview Dorothy Graham Wescott tells of her personal background, her joining Civil Air Patrol and subsequent assignment to Civil Air Patrol Coastal Patrol Base 16 at Manteo, North Carolina.

She vividly recalls the burning of many ships off of the North Carolina coast and the dramatic reduction in the number of them subsequent to the establishment of Coastal Patrol operations. Her unique position as secretary to the Base Commander enables her to recount many details of normal day to day operations, and the more dramatic events, such as the loss of Cross and Cooper, and the crash of Shields.

Additionally she provides information on the involvement of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Army and the Navy in the defense efforts during World War II.

With evident pride, she summarizes the overall worth of the Coastal Patrol operation and of the patriotic spirit of the time.

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H: Dorothy, suppose we start off with--do you want to be called Dorothy or Dot?

W: Well, they call me Dot here, because I thought it was cute when I left home--my family didn't let anybody call me Dot.

H: Suppose you start off with a little background about where Dot came from, did she have any military tradition in her family, her education, most anything you want to tell us so we'll know a little bit about you.

W: I was born in Edgefield, South Carolina, in a family of four girls, the second from the oldest, and I had a very, very good childhood. My father and mother were Christian people and brought us up in the same manner. After I finished high school--I was in high school tied for valedictorian of my class, but since the young man who was tied with me was going to the Citadel, I decided it would be worthwhile for him, moreso than me at that time, to have that recognition and that credit to him at the Citadel, and I thought that I would get a scholarship to another college. That scholarship did not pan out. However, I went to Asheville, North Carolina, and went in nurse's training in a psychiatric hospital there. And this happened to be a psychiatric hospital, as I say, and I found--

H: When was that, Dot?

W: That was--I was graduated from high school in '35. so that was approximately early '37, I believe. It may have been a little while before then. However, I loved the patients extremely, in fact I must have loved them too well. I could not get each case off my mind, I took it too personally, and I realized that I could not continue in that work for that reason, and they would become attached to me, and I had a great deal of responsibility about people I could not do anything about. I'm not going to go into detail about how they were treated in those days. They were treated remarkably well, because this was a private hospital, but as far as treatment, they did not have the shock treatments like they have today. They had a type of treatment they would relieve me from every case I was on to help them give this treatment, because they realized I could handle it after they had tried me. They would put injections into arms, and patients would go into convulsions and so we would have to keep them from swallowing tongues and those things. I saw many, many cases, which I won't elaborate on, cured by that method. I believe it was called metrasol, I'm not sure about that. But anyway, it was rewarding work, but I couldn't sleep, because I couldn't change shifts and sleep on one and then sleep on another, and I couldn't get off four hours and sleep on a suicide case for the rest of the night, and things like that. Due to the fact that I was not afraid of any of them, and I could talk all day on the subject, but I'm not supposed to do that. However, then I went out on a private case in Ashville, for a lovely woman, she was I expect thirty years, maybe older than I at that time, but through mutual acquaintances and other people around in Ashville, I married a young man who was ten years older than I, from Logansport, Indiana. He came down for a visit and kept coming back, so we finally got married. Then, after we'd been married fourteen months, he was junior champion tennis player of the state of Indiana, had gone to Culver Military Academy, very athletic, I'm telling you that because of the strange things in the way of health that you would not anticipate. So, we'd been married for fourteen months and I'd been out of the hospital for three days and he says you've

got to go back for exploratory. He was carrying me up and downstairs for my meals, and we had a Dr. McQuaid and his wife from Canada visiting us. That night the dear lady who came and stayed with us until I was able to take the house over again, fixed a lovely dinner for us and we went to bed about 11:30, being accustomed to being awakened early in the morning in those days with a cold washcloth in your face about 5:30 or so, and then bringing your breakfast at 8, I was not out of the habit of waking that early, having been out of the hospital only three days. I awakened about 5:30, and when I did something just told me that something was wrong with Max. His head was turned the opposite direction than toward me, and I put my head over and put my hand on his heart. I got no beat, and I knew something immediately. When I put my feet on his feet, rigor mortis had set in. The neighbors said they heard me scream, and I don't remember. Anyway, we were gone from there. This was Logansport, Indiana, on September 24th of 1940--'41, I believe, or close in there. So I stayed in Logansport for a while, and then I decided the best thing for me to do, I could not get over it, because I was having nightmares every two hours every night, so Daddy and my sister both came up to see me and stayed with me for a while, so I came on back to South Carolina where I was born and raised, with my mother and daddy, asking them not to say anything to me about it, let me handle it my way, not give me any preferential treatment. But the same thing continued. My mother would come wake me up every two hours, finding me crying. So I decided that before January 1st of the next year I had to go somewhere and bury myself in something and get into a new life entirely, before I would ever get out of this situation I was in, in a situation which was really unbearable. So I packed everything in the car and I went off to Raleigh, North Carolina, where I had friends, and I got an apartment there with three other girls. Then I went to Business College, and I came out of Howard Business College with all kinds of references and recommendations, and due to that I was hired from the applications, I suppose, of 25, as office manager of Remington Rand in Raleigh, which is Sperry Rand now.

I had a--this is funny--I never heard of one before or since, I had an efficiency expert come down from Richmond to interview all of us, anyway I got the job. And it soon became apparent to me that I was not going to be satisfied there. I had to do something for my country, because everything was getting, it looked like to me, worse and worse, and I had to do my part.

H: That was what, early '41?

W: Somewhere along about that time. Well, I didn't stay with Remington Rand over about seven or eight months. It was early in '41.

H: The war hadn't started.

W: Oh, yes, the war had started. This had to be early '42. It definitely was. Anyway, I wrote to my parents about it, and talked to my parents about it on the telephone, that I felt like I would like to go overseas with the Red Cross, and they objected, due to the fact that they had been through a very traumatic experience when my husband died suddenly, and when they got the telephone message, they thought immediately it was me, because my husband had never been sick, he'd played thirty-six holes of golf the afternoon before he died, and they'd never had any reason to think he was sick, but they did know I was sick, and they thought the death message was about me. So I thought again, what can I do to serve my country without going overseas anywhere. A thought came to me that the Civil Air Patrol was an organization I'd heard about, and there happened to be a man in Remington Rand at that time, in the office where I was manager, who had joined the local Civil Air Patrol group there. I don't believe he had participated in active duty in any bases, but I did know that it did exist and a good thing was going on. Therefore, I joined the Civil Air Patrol in order to qualify to go on active duty, and anyone who has ever known anything about Civil Air Patrol would know what the qualifications would be. We had to have thirty

hours of meteorology, thirty of navigation, thirty of first aid, thirty of open field drill. I can't think of any more right at the moment, but I believe there were one or two more. So I did qualify and did apply for active duty with the Coastal Patrol. There were two bases in North Carolina at the time and I was then in Raleigh, and I chose Manteo, North Carolina. I had never heard of it in my life, and I was accepted for active duty and was given my orders, what you might say, we were under the Army Air Force, which was more like sealed orders. I came down on the bus from Raleigh, and when I got down to the beach and to Manteo, I thought, well, what have I done to myself to apply to come to such a job as this and to volunteer for such a place.

H: When was this, Dot?

W: This was in August of '42. August the seventh or August the twelfth. I don't have my notes before me and my correspondence. So my orders were, I came on a Saturday, to contact the base commander immediately upon my arrival. So when I arrived at the bus station, I asked the driver where was the nearest hotel, and he said, Lady, right across the street is the only hotel. So I went to the hotel, and before I registered I called the base, and the commander was not in at that time, and whoever had been on duty, I believe it was the Intelligence Officer, I am not certain, had told me to call the next morning. I told him who I was and he was aware that I was to arrive. So, I registered at the hotel. There is very little need to go into the minute details of my experiences before I got to the base the next morning.

H: Well, that's an interesting--

W: Well, I did register at the hotel, and all the plaster was falling off the walls, and I decided I've got to go find some place to eat. So I walked down to the desk in the lobby and asked them where the restaurant was. Well, the only restaurant in town happened to be one right up the street from the hotel.

and when I walked in, and after everybody had come to me from Remington Rand from the Charlotte office, the Greensboro office, the Richmond office, pleading with me not to come down, not to--to stay with them, and they said about mosquitoes down here and all of these things. So I went into the restaurant where the screens were torn out, and I sat in a booth, and they had the little nickelodeon boxes on the wall beside it, and I put a nickel in and pressed it down, and roaches went straight up the wall in hordes. So I went on and ate my food, and after a while I started scratching on my legs, what is this? Oh, those are those mosquitoes they were telling me about. Anyway, I did get out to the base the next morning.

H: Excuse me for a minute. At that stage of the game, were you in uniform or not?

W: No, because we were not given uniforms until we came on duty after we got to the base. We did not go into uniform until then. So they came and picked me up the next morning and took me out to the base and introduced me to everyone out there. I immediately felt the sincerity of everyone's feelings in there, just like I had a sincerity and a purpose, and it was a great relationship.

H: Who was your first contact out there, when you arrived that next morning?

W: It was the Base Commander, James Hamilton. I believe he was from Charlotte, North Carolina. Very shortly after I came, he went back to Charlotte, and Allen H. Watkins from Greensboro became Base Commander.. Can you turn it off for a minute?

H: It's all right. If you don't want it, we'll take it out.

W: Okay. Well, I thought that James Hamilton--I'm very loyal in my feelings--and I thought that James Hamilton had got some kind of a dirty trick played on him, and I felt like he had been put

out for no reason that he should have been. So I made a remark to some of the personnel on the base. I know exactly who it was, but I better not put this in there because it might be read by some of them. Anyway, I made the remark and the report went to the new base commander that I was not going to take dictation from him. Of course I didn't mean that at all, but I just said it in a frivolous way. Well, he got the word and he wasn't long calling me in to take dictation, and of course I took dictation. But we did have a good time.

H: You came on board as secretary to the base commander?

W: That's correct. That was my assignment.

H: Now, what kind of rank did they give you?

W: Corporal.

H: So you met James Hamilton, and how long did he stay?

W: It was a very short time. I don't know. Paul Bridges could tell you better than I, because he was here before I came. I know him well still and I think the world of him. I came to be very close to him and his family.

H: When you first arrived, where was the base located?

W: The base was located at a little place called Skycoe, and it was then a two-story dwelling, and there was no way we could keep the mosquitoes out of that. The landing field was across the little dirt road from the office building, and the Civil Air Patrol personnel had cleared it of deep undergrowth and big trees and all this so we could use it for our flight field. Our service men, when they'd go out to service the planes would have to wear netting over all their body that wasn't covered by clothes to be able to tolerate the mosquitoes. Those men made jokes told

among everybody, about the mosquitoes, how big they were, and what they would say to each other and these things, like, you've probably already heard or read: Shall we eat him here or drag him off to the swamp. One service man was quoted as saying he put X number of gallons of gasoline into what he thought was number five airplane before he realized it was a mosquito. Anyway we were all in it together and we were all running along fine together, no complaints, everything worked smoothly. There was an administrative section head, there was an intelligence officer, and then there were sub-heads, sub-officers above them.

H: Okay, now you worked directly for the base commander, then.

W: Yes.

H: You didn't work for the administrative officer.

W: Not at all. Bernice Barber from Greensboro was the administrative section head. She and I are still staunch friends today. I see her every January in Atlanta when I go to the Furniture Market Sale, because she is now in Atlanta and has been for many years. So after I stayed in here about three weeks, I got a day off. I may have gotten a day off prior to that time, but I didn't go anywhere. But I did go to Norfolk, Virginia, after I got the day off. In those days the sailors, of course, outnumbered civilians, and it was disgusting to me to see signs on the lawns saying "No Sailors or Dogs Allowed" and things of that nature. And I said: Good Lord, if you'll take me back to Manteo, I promise you I'll never complain again, and I kept my pact. I came back to Manteo and was very happy to be here, after visualizing and having seen Norfolk in person.

H: I don't want to dwell on it, but were you in uniform at that time?

W: Yes.

H: Will you briefly describe the uniform for me?

W: It was a basic Army Air Force uniform except for the epaulets and the insignia.

H: You wore red epaulets?

W: Yes, and the insignia of course was different. We had the submarine, the bomb and submarine. Our dress uniforms were the forest green and our work uniforms, either skirts or trousers, in khaki, and overseas cap.

H: Okay. Either skirt or trousers, at your option, right?

W: Yes.

H: At any time, did you all wear culottes there?

W: No.

H: That's a specific question, because that was one of the uniforms that was authorized, but nobody wore them.

W: Yes, well we wore either skirts or pants at our discretion.

H: And you came back from Norfolk, glad to be back to Manteo?

W: Very glad. Of course, I had done my duty to the best of my ability before, but I was more eager to do it later, after that experience.

H: Tell me a duty day. Just start off in the morning, when you got to the office. What did you do?

W: Well now, after we'd stayed down at Skycoe for a certain length of time, the Naval Auxiliary built an airport, which still

exists for commercial lines and private planes at the north end of Manteo today, and then when the--

H: Tell us about Skycoe, that two-story building, an old residence, really.

W: Well, we had a little, you might say, lunch counter place, where we could have lunch, but that was all the facilities we had there, which we had later on a mess hall out at the other location. But, the routine day, you reported for duty exactly on time, and we naturally--

H: Which was what? Seven, eight?

W: As I recall, it must have been eight, but I'm not certain. We'd all meet, and we didn't all have transportation from where we might be staying. We were staying in private homes where we could afford in Manteo. I was on \$75 a month, and that way we were affording what we could at that price. So we'd get room and board. I did in most of the rooms I stayed in, with lovely people from Manteo, and Manteo people that day, and perhaps this day, if they don't like you, you might just as well get on out, because in those days you were considered a spy, because they'd been completely isolated until the war came. When you walked down the street you knew, and when you went into their homes as a boarder you knew very soon whether they liked you or whether they didn't. And if they liked you, there's nothing they wouldn't do for you, they were the finest people in the world, but if they didn't like you, you might just as well move. You'd had it-- for any reason, it might be minute, but it was a lovely, lovely relationship I had with everybody down here, and I enjoyed being with them as well as being at the base. So at Skycoe, I believe it was about eight in the morning we'd go on duty, and shortly after that time we'd all be called out for drill, and the routine would be that I would go to my base commander's office first, when I reported in. Then if there was any dictation, any orders,

out of the ordinary that had come up for the day, he'd brief me on those, and at different times he'd tell me of certain ones he needed to see in his office at certain times, and it was my duty to tell the other people that he wanted to see them at a certain hour, and he, of course, would put it on his calendar on his dates. It was more or less routine office work for me, really, taking dictation and typing, and the contact that you would have with the president of a company if you were his secretary, with other people--kind of a coordination between the base commander and the other people as far as when he wanted to see them and in specific things of that nature. We would get off, I believe, it was about eight to maybe five or six, I'm not sure.

H: You'd eat lunch down there at that lunch counter?

W: Yes. We'd have to have a little lunch. It had a little room in there that was set up more like a little kitchenette of some type.

H: And who did the cooking for you?

W: We did our own, whatever we wanted, soup and things like that. Just routine lunch. But later on then, when the Naval Auxiliary built the landing strips where the present airport stands here in Manteo, they were located on one side of the airstrip and runways, and the Civil Air Patrol was allowed to occupy the other side, which we did. We had a great relationship with the Navy, and then we had a mess hall. Let me backtrack a little bit. I remember one time, when we'd get together to come down to the base from Manteo, whichever place it might be, we had one girl who was an airplane mechanic, Polly Overcash.

H: You actually had a female mechanic?

W: Yes, she was an excellent mechanic. She kept charge of that shop, and she knew every part that was in there. We had other

mechanics, but she more or less had charge of the parts, and she rode a motorcycle out to the base. One day she begged me that I would go with her, and I went one time, but that was enough in that sand. No more have I been on a motorcycle. We made it safely, but I didn't have much feeling for it or liking for it after that. So when we moved over to that side of the base, that was real coming up in the world for us, because we were living then. We had common barracks type homes, barracks type offices and things of that nature, and our hangars, and our mess hall, and we had a local lady who was cooking, two or more, cooking in the mess hall.

H: Did you kick in money for running the mess hall? How did you get your food for the mess hall, or do you recall?

W: I believe that that was taken care of somehow by the base. I don't recall having to pay anything in, unless you wanted something special. But these people around here are very good cooks, and there wouldn't be much demand for that. I do recall when the ships, the planes, went home for anything, they paid people on the planes for flying down here, and I believe that they must have had, the relationship I believe they had was that it was understood that if they had to go home for something, or could get leave for something, they could use their own planes. Because I well remember some of them flying barbecue in from famous places up around Rocky Mount and Wilson.

H: How about the mess hall, would they serve three meals a day?

W: Just lunch. We were on our own for breakfast and dinner. There was one hotel on the beach, that a lot of our--. I believe the entire hotel was turned over to the Civil Air Patrol at a nominal rental at that time, because there were no people coming down as far as tourists were concerned, due to the black-outs that we had. We had to black our lights out, with just a little

tiny square in the center, and that was to keep from silhouetting the ships at sea. And when we came down here, the famous night spot on the beach was two stories and you could stand up there on the dance floor on the second story and look out the windows, and any number of nights, if you wanted to go there and look, you could see two or three of our ships burning. And we were flying these little Stinsons, and you probably know more about the names of the planes than I recall, anyway they had two 100 pound depth charges.

H: Tell me about seeing ships out there. You saw ships, when you first got down here, burning?

W: Yes, sir, we sure did. Many!

H: How long did that go on?

W: Without many nights passing that you didn't see them. Well, the beach over there, you could not walk on it for the litter from the ships that had been torn apart, from the cases of fruit and the cases of vegetables that had come in from our ships, and from sailors hats, and all these things, you could not walk on the beach anywhere in Dare County at that time. And the people who've never experienced this and have never been told the story of this do not realize how close that war was to our shores. But our pilots always flew in pairs, and each one had an observer, and they had two 100 pound depth charges. I'm sure that Carl maybe will tell you that we know that they were more afraid of our radios than they were of our depth charges. But they did go to a base, I believe in Hackensack, New Jersey, to be more fully trained in the velocity of the wind, as far as dropping the depth charges was concerned when they sighted a submarine, and how far it took to submerge, and everything that they needed to know in order to make a hit. And I on one occasion had the privilege of flying out with the base commander when they had sighted a submarine.

H: Okay. I recently sent Harry a picture of a group of Manteo people who were at that school at Atlantic City, New Jersey.

W: Oh, really.

H: I just came across it, just a few weeks back. So you'll probably see somebody you know in it.

W: I no doubt will--most of them.

H: Back to your involvement then, when you moved up here, undoubtedly your office was much better at the Naval Auxiliary Station.

W: It was much better, but by the same token we had sand storms, and this literally happened in the base commander's office. It blew sand between the pages of books. So we all had to fold up and go home. So he and I had so much work to do on books that we took the books to his cottage on the beach, which he built there in '37, he was one of the first people ever built a cottage on Nag's Head, and so we went there and worked for the rest of the day.

H: You say you had a lot of books. What kind of books?

W: A lot of it was more like dictating and typing, I expect, more than bookkeeping, actually.

H: Well, you didn't have to do the financial records there or anything.

W: No. The administrative section head did that. I remember on only one occasion, on December 23rd, it must have been of '43, it may have been of '42 again, it was '42, we had us a little game of cards going with pilots and whoever was with us at the time in

the waiting room. I guess you'd call it, for the pilots and observers--

H: That would be up at the main airport?

W: Yes, up at the main airport.

H: Do you recall when you moved from Skycoe up to the main airport?

W: No, I do not. There would be others, perhaps, that would, but I do not.

H: Sounds like it might have been early December.

W: It wasn't too long after I came here, but it must have been along about that time, but I do know that on December 23rd we were there, so it possibly was very early in December. But this particular day on December 23rd, what stays in my mind so vividly is that it was very rough seas that day, and that our pilots, and our head mechanic was a fellow by the name of Brown, and there's no way that a plane was going off that line unless he was 100% it was right, structurally and mechanically. And he was a very good mechanic, and I am sure to this day that one reason we didn't lose more men than we did was because of the fact that Brownie, as we called him, was such a good mechanic and so strict about letting a plane go out. However, they did go out on December 23rd, in pairs as usual, and one plane went down--very high seas, and of course the other one radioed the problem, and everybody went out to search, the Navy included.

H: Do you remember what time of the day that was?

W: It was fairly late in the afternoon. It wasn't at dusk, maybe just about dusk, but it was surely not near sundown, because they did not fly at night, they did not fly after dark.

H: That would be Lt. Cook and--

W: Lawrence Cooper. But I happened to be playing cards with them just as they were called to take the flight. And of course they never did find Lawrence Cooper, but Cook's body washed up on March the 23rd of the following year down near Beaufort, in a good state of preservation because the water was cold. But that was a very saddening thing for us, and we experience that in all of life. But the reason that our base was disbanded is because the Navy decided that they own, which I think they really do, from the land out to patrol.

H: Before we disband the base, let's talk a little bit more about it. Now you say the Cook-Cooper thing, since the CO undoubtedly got notified immediately when it happened, were you around when he was told.

W: Oh, yes.

H: What was the reaction and what kind of plan was put into effect?

W: Of course we were all very devastated, and they sent out flights from our base as well as calling the Navy to send some of their planes out, which they very willingly did, and gladly did, and the Coast Guard. They were sent out. They had life rafts, but somehow they must not have been able to get into them, when the plane hit the water, because no one could ever--but however, the winds were so high they may have been in them and may have been washed out of them, or they may have been in them and they couldn't see them for the waves. But they were thoroughly searched for, not only that afternoon as late as they could, but the next day and I don't recall how many days after, but of course they were not found.

H: Those were the only two fatalities you had.

W: Those were the only two that we had.

H: How about crashes, did you have any other crashes?

W: No, we had one plane that did go down, but it was near enough to the shore that the pilot and observer were able to come in on their life raft by themselves unassisted to the beach.

H: Do you remember who they were?

W: I remember one of them's name was Shields. [Tape change.]

H: Okay. You say you don't remember the observer's name, but the pilot's name was Shields. About when was that, do you recall?

W: I do not recall.

H: That's a matter of record that I can find.

W: I'm sure of that.

H: Now, so your day, I imagine, up at this end was pretty much like it was at Skycoe, you just kept things going for the boss.

W: Very much so. Same thing was routine, other than location, and the flying facilities so far as runways.

H: How about your personal living situation. Did it improve after you'd been down here for a while? As far as your boarding with people was probably better than a hotel.

W: It was a good relationship. It was much better, and it was a good relationship with the local people because it built their confidence in us, and it didn't take very long for them to do that, and the local people have told me many, many times that

before the Navy took over, that we had already, and I say WE with pride, all the people who volunteered, had already frightened these U-boats away, so the job had more or less been cleaned up, according to the local people and my observation.

H: You say when you first got here, you could stand on that second story building and see the ships burning at sea, did that pretty much stop-after a while?

W: It didn't take too long for it to stop. And we hated to see a moonlight night, as pretty as it is over that ocean when it shimmers, but this silhouettes our ships for the U- boats. I remember on one occasion we all were called back to the base one night because it had been reported that landing craft had been spotted. And we wouldn't dare strike a match or hardly breathe, but we stayed at base all night and nothing materialized. I don't recall from what source that landing craft supposedly was coming from, but it was reported and all Civil Air Patrol members were called back on duty.

H: Do you recall any stories that you picked up from the pilots about dropping of bombs or anything like that? Spotting submarines, or--

W: Not in particular at this moment.

H: Let me ask you. Did you have to fill in in the plotting room or anything like that at any time, or did you just--

W: To some extent, but very rarely. We were all aware and coordinating all the management together. We were all aware of just what each office was doing at all times, although we may not be really active in it, we were all very aware of it.

H: How about your medical facility, and I realize that's an oddball question, but did they have a doctor?

W: No. We had a practical nurse, not a practical nurse, I beg your pardon, we had a registered nurse who was a member of Civil Air Patrol on active duty with Coastal Patrol, Lottie Sapp, she was from Winston Salem. And her husband was also down here. He was, I don't remember, Jeff must have been a pilot, either a pilot or an observer, but I believe he was a pilot. Yes, I'm sure Jeff was a pilot. But as far as that, we didn't have an infirmary as such, but Lottie would take care of minor needs, and then we did have a local doctor.

H: What were the major problems, as far as sickness was concerned? Influenza or any particular sickness.

W: Nothing in particular. We didn't get malaria or anything like that. We did have one girl I felt like was going out of her mind because we would sit in our cars and roll the windows up, and you could see all these mosquitoes blackening, literally blackening the windshield, and I thought she was going out of her mind from seeing these things, because they'd bitten her so many times. But we didn't have any specific problems, we didn't have any specific health problems, like I say, no malaria, no nothing that you wouldn't have today in ordinary life.

H: How about your spare time? What did you do in your spare time?

W: Well, like I say, there was this night club on the beach, which was about the only place in Dare County to go. If we wanted to go there, we could go; we could go to each other's homes or rooms, or whatever, and play cards, play in the living rooms of the homes where we were staying, or play cards, perhaps bridge or hearts or whatever it might come up to be with some of the other group when they'd come down, and also with the people in the home. And we were invited out into the homes to play bridge and things of that nature.

H: The local community pretty well accepted you all.

W: Very definitely. Very definitely.

H: How about base parties. Did you all have any parties or anything at the base?

W: We never had any base parties, as I recall, as such. No. It was not part of our activity.

H: You pretty much came to work and went home, but you socialized because you were all down here together.

W: Down here for a purpose, and the CCC camps were down here at that time, and the Army was down here at that time.

H: Was the CCC still working?

W: They were still down here and their base was still active. And then when they moved out of that particular base and were disbursed from this area, the Army went into those quarters. The Army patrolled the beach on foot at night.

H: The Army or the Coast Guard?

W: The Army. I remember quite well, because one night, I happened not to be there, fortunately, because one night at this Nag's Head Casino, which is a famous spot around here in those days, the only place to dance or anything like that to go, whoever was in charge of this group was going to patrol the beach that night took them into the casino, because he was too early to do on duty, and had them check their rifles, and they got a bit much, I guess, but they went down and took the rifles and backed everybody in there out of the second story windows. So, I'm glad I wasn't there that night. I didn't go an awful lot, but it was an interesting little place. We got a lot of communications with

the local people and their feelings about different things, too. We got a lot of close relationships there, which is very important. I can't stress too much how this place was isolated before World War II came along and opened it up. They had two wooden bridges coming in to here and the rest of it was ferry.

H: How about your finances? How did you survive on your pay? What was it, five dollars a day, or four dollars a day?

W: Well, we had our uniforms that were issued, and in the war days food was so inexpensive we could eat so inexpensively. Because two places, I recall, where they turned over their dining room to serve Civil Air Patrol, whoever wanted to eat in there, they served in quantities and it was good food but it was a very minimum cost. And we didn't eat a lot.

H: So you survived on it.

W: We survived on it. We really didn't need a lot. It's just like people who are in self-supportive missionary work. As long as you have your shelter and things like that, you really don't need a lot.

H: Let's talk a little about your overall--how effective do you consider the base? Do you consider it was an effective operation?

W: Well, it's not prejudice that I'm speaking from, and I sincerely do think it was a very, very successful operation.

H: How do you measure success?

W: Well, like I told you just prior to this, by virtue of the fact, most of these bombings had stopped of our ships, before we were disbursed, and I feel like that is certainly an indication that it was very effective.

H: How about management of the base itself? You think it was pretty well managed?

W: I liked the management of it. Unfortunately, I am more or less of a perfectionist, and if I should see anything going wrong, it would bother me, and I felt it was managed very, very well. And they seemed all the management to get along well together. It makes a difference, I think, in the life of a volunteer group and the life of a drafted group, or the life of a group that is much, much bigger than our operation, because of a personal relationship there that each one looked out for the other. If someone needed something, or if the children of the few that had children down here-- well that was only the base commander, I guess, who had his three little boys down here, and they grew up like stair steps, and two of them still live at Kill Devil Hills today. So I sincerely think it was very smoothly run.

H: You obviously met your operational requirements, I mean that you made all your patrols.

W: Yes. Of course if anyone got out of line, the base commander had to discipline them.

H: Which did not necessarily make him popular, but it was necessary.

W: Right. It had to be. It had to be. If you get a pilot that goes out and gets too much one night, you've got to tell him, and either lay him off for a certain number of days or however. You have to discipline in whatever manner is effective, and whatever manner is available. Also he can't do that again. I don't mean that we had many occasions for that, because that was not the type group we had, but on one or two occasions we did.

H: A few little specific things. Did the base as such-- sometimes an emblem or an insignia becomes an esprit de corps operation, you know--did the base have any logo or symbol or anything they used?

W: Nothing special. The only insignia that we had. I don't recall anything special.

H: Just the regular CAP insignia.

W: Yes. We had the little buttons that went on our lapels, CAP, besides the sleeve insignia on the uniforms.

H: Okay. Now, how about--Did you have some guards there also?

W: Oh, yes. We had guards at all times.

H: Your guards, did they wear any special insignia?

W: I don't believe they did. I don't recall any of them wearing any special insignia.

H: That has a point that I'll tell you about afterwards.

W: It was just the regular Civil Air Patrol uniform with the regular insignia.

H: Okay. Did you wear those red epaulets all the time, or did you finally have a burning party and get rid of them?

W: We wore them all the time. I still have mine, intact. No. We didn't have a burning party to get rid of them.

H: Okay. Now you started to tell me about the base closing down, when I interrupted you.

W: Well, I think the Navy was right, and I think the information can be found anywhere that the Navy should patrol from the beach out, and we were patrolling thirty miles out, therefore they took over, and therefore the Army dropped us.

H: When did they take over?

W: Oh, dear. I need my notes.

H: Well, August the 31st of '43 was when the program closed the base down.

W: Well, it had to be right then. But a lot happened in that year.

H: Do you recall any special little stories or anything that happened during that period of time? The funnies, or sad, either one, if you told a real sad story, obviously--

W: Well, I recall something I did that was forbidden. We were still at Skycoe when we changed base commanders, and I had made that silly remark before I even met him, I was not going to take dictation for him, knowing I didn't mean it, and knowing that if I had meant it I'd have been kicked out of here or I'd have been whatever, because we were strictly military. And so another girl and I took a back road out of Skycoe so we wouldn't pass through the guard station, and got stuck in the mud somewhere back there and stayed for a little length of time before we could get out. We got out and went right on back to the base, naturally. There were some funny little stories, I'm sure, because you don't just live with a life of that type at all times or any life without having these things come up, but they evade me at the moment.

H: How about visitors, did you get any visiting dignitaries around here?

W: Oh, yes.

H: From other bases, Earle Johnson or Harry Blee?

W: We got some higher officials that would come for inspection. I don't recall if a Major Dawson, who wrote my papers, he was in Charlotte, as, I guess he was state commander of Civil Air Patrol at that time, I'm not sure, but this can be verified however. And I believe he came on occasion to inspect the station, and inspect the uniforms and inspect the personnel and watch open drill, open field drill.

H: How about pilots from other bases, did they come in very often?

W: Not very often. On occasion.

H: Okay. So the Navy put you all out of business in August of '43, and you all folded up. Did you stay here while they were closing the base down?

W: Yes. I stayed here and I stayed here after the base was closed down, because I still wanted to be in something to do with some portion of the war effort. Therefore, I went to work for a place called Gordon and Company, and they were making parts for ships, made out of hemp and different things, and steel, and different things of that nature, in down town Manteo. And I stayed there for some time. Unfortunately, Mr. Gordon would take his metal allotments and his hemp allotments and things of this nature with him when he'd go to the Department of Transportation and Army Engineers and those people to get his contracts, and I never touched those at all. I only kept books for him. I went there as a secretary, but his CPA finally talked me into keeping books, and that was my first experience as really keeping books. However, I left him when they got a rather thick book on him and called me to come to Atlanta to testify against him for overdraw-

ing his allotment of certain critical materials. And of course since I had never handled his allotment forms they didn't require that I go. I got out of going. But I thought well I better get out of this, now this has gone too far. So I got out of that, and I went to work for a lawyer in Manteo, who happened to be the only lawyer on the island.

H: So basically your CAP involvement stopped when the base closed down.

W: Oh yes.

H: You didn't have much to do with CAP after that, other than I believe you were in the CAP Veterans Organization for a while.

W: Yes.

H: Were you active in that or just a member?

W: Just a member. And there was something there at one time about veterans' rights for the active duty CAP members, but the bill was never passed.

H: It's been fought several times.

W: Well, actually we were under the Army Air Force, and actually it wouldn't mean that much to me, I don't think, but by the same token I think it was justified.

H: I think so, but, like I say it's been fought and lost. Well, Dorothy, in summary, how do you feel about your own personal contribution and the contribution of people in general in Coastal Patrol?

W: Well, my personal feeling about mine, I'm very proud of it, I'm very glad that I did it, and I think everyone had that same

feeling. Every volunteer that we had on our base, I believe certainly had that same feeling. They were very glad that they gave their time and whatever to the war effort as any way they could.

H: It was the spirit of the times. Everybody at that time felt like--

W: Patriotic urge. Yes. Definitely. And we had lawyers, and we had doctors, we had all types of people, all walks of life, and mechanics. We had a few you may call draft dodgers, but it didn't protect them, they were drafted anyway.

H: How could you dodge the draft when you weren't protected?

W: Yes, but they may have thought so. But they were drafted anyway. But that was not the basic, primary feeling, or the primary reason. The primary reason was to do everything we could to help during our war, which was really our war, and right on our back door.

H: And you feel everybody was well motivated at the time?

W: Definitely. I surely do, because there was no other reason they would be here. There was too many other reasons they would be elsewhere.

H: Okay. Well, that's a good summary, Dot. I've talked to a lot of people about this thing. I think that's the common thread with everybody, which was, number one, the strong Americanism spirit of wanting to do something for your country, and the personal sacrifice in deciding to go do it at an unusual operation, where they couldn't profit from all the glory of a Civil Air Patrol base.

Wescott

W: Well, I really feel like I would not be happy with myself if I had not done it, even though I was offered all kinds of things to stay with the company, and I was doing well in the job and had a chance of promotion and things of that nature, and I've never regretted it.

H: Well, we'll go off tape now.

